DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 052 890 RE 003 624

AUTHOR Manning, John C.
TITLE Continuing Professional Experiences in Reading.
PUB DATE Apr 71
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the meeting of the International Reading Association, Atlantic City, N.J., Apr. 19-23, 1971

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Beginning Reading, Culturally Disadvantaged, *Extension Education, Inner City, Inservice Programs, *Inservice Teacher Education, *Reading Instruction, Reading Programs, *Summer Programs

ABSTRACT

Extension courses and inservice training for reading teachers can increase their ability to teach reading. For maximum effectiveness extension courses should (1) emphasize the technical rather than the theoretical preparation of reading teachers, (2) combine lecture and discussion with classroom practice activities, (3) provide a variety of classroom reading materials, (4) consider effective instructional techniques, and (5) include visits by the instructor to the classrooms of his pupil-teachers. Two types of inservice training activities that have proved effective are presummer school experiences and major summer and school year programs. Several presummer school 5-day programs are being conducted in Minneapolis for teachers who will be teaching a prekindergarten summer school experience. These summer inservice efforts are characterized by demonstration teaching with the provision of relevant classroom instructional materials. The Minneapolis Combine Project is an example of a major inservice program. It is a comprehensive effort to resolve the reading problems of innercity children through the combined efforts of teachers, graduate and undergraduate students, and university personnel. Descriptions of these programs are available through the Gordon Instructional Materials Center, Minneapolis Public Schools and through the office of the author at the University of Minnesota. (VJ)

ED052890

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Paper Presented
at the

INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION

Atlantic City
Wednesday, April 21, 1971

Symposia, Improved Preparation of Reading
Teachers for the Seventies

"Continuing Professional Experiences in Reading"

by
John C. Manning
University of Minnesota

RE003 624

There appears general agreement among reading educators that neither the number nor the quality of undergraduate reading methods preparation is sufficient to the demands of teaching all the children of all the citizens to read.

Criticism of teacher education programs in reading and other elementary subject matter areas has been chronic. Some criticism notably Austin's The First R has been scholarly and significant. Most criticism, however, has been subjective, emotional, and evasive. Indeed, criticizing teacher education programs may well be the last public enjoyment of the academician that...and, of course, advising Presidents on foreign policy.

Impelled by the vogue of "behavioral objectives" a considerable number of undergraduate teacher education models have been generated for discussion and hopeful use. I trust you will forgive this critical aside but it appears to me that we have more proposed effective models than we have real effective people.

The "continuing professional experiences" or in-service scene is another matter entirely. Degrees of criticism of in-service efforts may range from "none at all" since no in-service experiences are available, to severe criticism since too many experiences of the wrong kind are available and worse, at times, required.

There are at least three dimensions to the "continuing professional experiences" situation:

-Formal course work of the extension variety usually directed toward suburban or rural area reading problems

-Formal course work at colleges or universities

-In-service activities conducted in public school settings during the school year or in the summer months

Perhaps I'm creating a false dichotomy but I should like to define formal course work in university settings as professional or theoretical preparation. Extension course experiences and other public school conducted activities I would define as technical preparation. Both types of preparations are obviously necessary for the effective teacher of reading but I submit that the main problems which plague the reading practitioners are much more technical than professional. And I might add that we are all practitioners, or should be. This paper will discuss in modest detail those continuing experiences that are technical or public school oriented in nature.

To be effective extension type courses should combine preparatory lecture/discussion and classroom practice activities. Such combined activity courses offer the greatest possibilities for changing teacher behavior and improving the quality of reading instruction.

The student populations for such courses should be limited to single school districts of a small size or to primary grade teachers or first grade teachers or to other personnel units which reduce the range of possible course content in a realistic manner. Many extension type courses are meaningless because they attempt to do "all things for all teachers."

The course content of extension type continuing experiences should be organized to provide practitioners access to basal, ancillary, and enrichment reading materials available and appropriate for the classroom

populations. Further the course should include discussions of instructional techniques which have been effective in teaching children to read. Much in-service participation is evasive and irrelevant since it avoids the realities of existing reading materials and the standard practices of participating classroom teachers.

The activities described to this point could very well be conducted in the late afternoon or evening though I am unalterably committed to the goal that all in-service activities should be conducted during the regular school day with released time provided to teachers and alternative programs developed for pupils affected by the in-service activities. Time does not permit an extensive explanation of this view but following the meeting I would be available to detail the matter.

The late afternoon or evening discussions of extension type in-service activities should be followed by at least a full day of purposeful supervisory activities by the course instructor. Quite simply the course instructor should visit the classrooms of his teacher-students to determine his own instructional significance. During classroom visits the course instructor should use demonstration teaching as a major vehicle for changing classroom behaviors. Further, involvement in the daily school reading program increases the likelihood that lectures and discussions will be germane to existing classroom conditions and problems. In summary extension type activities should combine discussion and practice, should serve a realistic grade range of involved practitioners, should be specific and relevant to existing instructional conditions and should involve supervision of classroom practice by the

course instructor.

The possibilities for a variety of in-serivce activities in public school settings during the regular school year and during the summer are extensive. After school meetings, Saturday conferences, professional conferences, minimum day, and limited day meetings are regularly conducted in most school districts during the school year. Indeed as we seem to polarize on a labor management axis, such continuing in-service activities are quite prominent in the negotiation proceedings. Such incidental and sporadic meetings, while well intended, do not in my judgment produce meaningful results. The discussion here will focus on two types of public school in-service activities.

- Pre summer school experiences
- Major in-service summer and school year programs

Summer school reading programs can provide rich educational opportunities for children and a lively laboratory for teachers equipped with newly-learned instructional skills. Prior to the actual summer school program an in-service program for teachers should be conducted. In a paper presented at IRA two years ago and published in the Conference proceedings of that convention I detailed the content of a summer reading program for children. This discussion today will focus on teacher preparation for a program to be conducted for five days in the Minneapolis Public Schools in mid June.

Teachers who will teach children entering kindergarten in September of 1971 will receive instruction with classroom procedures for an effective

six weeks pre kindergarten summer school experience. The summer in-service training program will stress theories and practices related to oral language development for inner city pre school children. The morning hours will be devoted to instructional practices and procedures and materials for pupil use will be assembled and organized in the afternoon.

In separate sessions, teachers who will teach children entering first grade in September will also receive instruction with methods and materials essential to an effective pre first summer school program. This pre first program stresses language development, letter recognition, sound symbol correspondence skills and written language experience activities.

In other separate sessions, teachers who will teach children at other grade levels will receive instruction in classroom procedures related to a summer reading program written specifically for Minneapolis Public School children. Descriptions of all three programs are available through the Gordon Instructional Materials Center, Minneapolis Public Schools.

These summer in-service efforts are characterized by demonstration teaching with the provision of relevant instructional material for classroom use. These two provisions to my mind affect teacher instructional behaviors more significantly than any other in-service variables.

Time does not allow a detailed explanation of a major in-service teacher education program in reading being conducted currently in the Minneapolis Public Schools. The Combine Project is a comprehensive and combined effort to resolve the reading problems of inner city children of

Minneapolis. Personnel from the North and South-Central Pyramid complexes of the public schools, undergraduate and graduate students of the University of Minnesota and University teachers are involved in this massive and significant effort. Two Combine Centers have been established one at the Hawthorne School in the North Pyramid and one at the Lyndale School in the South. Five hundred educationally disadvantaged children in the two Centers are given additional instruction in reading to augment that of the classroom teacher. Planned, supervised, and systematic individual tutoring and small group instruction is provided by Juniors and Seniors of the University who are enrolled in two reading methods course sections. Five reading specialist interns supervise the activities of the undergraduates. These interns are full time Masters candidates who will supervise the student teaching experiences of the undergraduates and who will be assigned ultimately as resource teachers to elementary schools in the inner city. It is planned to train twenty such reading specialists, one for each of the elementary schools of the Pyramids.

Two clinically trained PhD candidates teach the methods courses and assist with supervision of the undergraduates. Two primary reading specialists and two intermediate specialists are assigned to the Pyramid Reading Task Force. Overall coordination and supervision of the program is provided by one of the finest reading teachers in the nation, Alberta Brown whose work in California brought her much deserved national recognition.

The in-service aspects of the Combine Project involve continuous in-service programs for teachers at all levels during the school year and

and in the summer months. The Combine Project is supported logistically by an instructional materials center and a writing team capable of producing, printing and distributing instructional materials for children on telephoned request of classroom teachers. In most instances developed and printed materials for children are available on the morning following the request. The general objectives and procedures of the Combine Project are contained in mimeographed materials which will be distributed to you. A detailed description of all components of the Combine Project is available on request of my office at the University of Minnesota.

All questions related to continuing or in-service education which were described today or other questions related to this most important aspect of improving the quality of our schools will receive a prompt and thoughtful reply from my University of Minnesota office. And I express sincere gratitude for your courteous attention to these remarks and for your subsequent reflection on them.

Printed by the Instructional Materials Center
Minneapolis Public Schools